

**Security Council**

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Identical letters dated 27 June 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the fortieth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/541).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the points made in its previous responses to reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the aforementioned Security Council resolutions.

The Syrian Government regrets to say that, after 40 reports, it sees no sign that the Secretariat has adopted a new, objective approach to the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. The authors have continued to deliberately neglect the real reasons for the decline in the living standards and humanitarian situation of Syrians, including terrorism, the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on the Syrian people by the United States of America, the European Union and other States, and interference by certain regional and international actors in Syrian affairs, with a view to prolonging the crisis and obstructing efforts to arrive at a peaceful political resolution through the Syrian-led political process that the United Nations has repeatedly endorsed. Indeed, United Nations officials have helped to prolong the crisis by their insistence on characterizing the situation in Syria as a "conflict" among Syrian parties, rather than a proxy war waged by the Governments of States Members of the United Nations against the Syrian State through military interference, direct and blatant aggression, and the use of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

The Syrian Government deplores the ongoing efforts of those responsible for preparing the report to cover up the key role played by the Syrian State and Syrian institutions, and the remarkable effort they have made, despite enormous challenges, to meet the basic subsistence needs of and provide essential services to the Syrian people throughout the country, including in regions where armed terrorist groups are present. Government-provided assistance has been essential to the success of any humanitarian work carried out by United Nations organizations, something that the Secretariat should have addressed in the report, including in paragraphs 33 to 36.

The Syrian Government stresses that it alone is authorized to ensure the safety and security of Syrians and to protect them. It has a constitutional duty under



national legislation and international law to fight the terrorism of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front and associated entities and terrorist individuals with numerous names and allegiances. Countering terrorism is essential to restoring security and stability, increasing the amount of assistance delivered and improving the humanitarian situation and living conditions of Syrians.

The Syrian Government reiterates that in the course of carrying out its counter-terrorism efforts, it has complied fully with the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to ensuring the security and safety of civilians and civilian service facilities, such as hospitals and schools. The Syrian Government is committed to international humanitarian law, which it seeks to disseminate and enforce. It has therefore strengthened the role of the Syrian National Committee on International Humanitarian Law and has organized numerous national activities and training sessions on international humanitarian law.

The Syrian Government is committed to the cessation of hostilities agreement that entered into force on 30 December 2016, and it condemns in the strongest possible terms the non-compliance of the armed terrorist groups and their backers. These groups have continued to violate the agreement, mounting attacks in numerous locations, firing mortar shells, committing heinous crimes and carrying out suicide attacks that have killed hundreds of Syrians and wounded hundreds more.

The Syrian Government rejects the erroneous political messages and claims that the authors of the report put forward in order to accuse the Syrian Government of besieging or deliberately preventing aid from reaching parts of Syria. The Syrian Government stresses that just as in other parts of Syria where national reconciliation agreements had been concluded, the successful implementation of a national reconciliation agreement in the Wa'r neighbourhood of Homs ended the suffering of thousands of civilians in that neighbourhood who had been used as human shields for years by armed terrorist groups. The Government furthermore stresses that civilians and armed individuals from that neighbourhood were allowed to choose whether they wished to remain there or go somewhere else. They were not put under any pressure at all. Indeed, hundreds of persons who had chosen to go to Jarabulus returned to the Wa'r neighbourhood, choosing to live under the protection of the Syrian State and return to their normal lives. Those who oppose national reconciliation agreements in Syria support terrorism and want to prolong the crisis.

The Syrian Government emphasizes that the Secretariat must take care in selecting the sources of its information in order to ensure due professionalism, objectivity and credibility. The Secretariat should therefore refrain from relying on information provided by the "open sources" for which the authors have a predilection. Their sole aim is to malign the Syrian Government and wipe clean the ledger of the terrorist groups and their backers.

The Syrian Government reiterates that it rejects the authors' use of non-legal terminology and characterizations. For instance, it has referred to armed terrorist groups as "non-State armed opposition", despite understanding full well that those groups are connected with the terrorist groups ISIL and the Nusrah Front. Their conduct in this regard distorts reality and violates United Nations resolutions on combating terrorism.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the authors have continued to promote the operations of the so-called international coalition while deliberately ignoring the reality that the coalition has no legitimacy, that the Syrian Government never asked for it, and that the Security Council never authorized it. They also fail to mention the consequences of the coalition's acts of aggression, which have

claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians and wreaked horrific damage on the infrastructure, including dams, bridges, hospitals and schools. The coalition's attacks have also reversed the development gains made by the Syrian people and destroyed economic resources that they need for rebuilding, most importantly oil and gas wells and related facilities and equipment. It is regrettable that the reports' authors fail to mention that, on 26 May 2017, "international coalition" warplanes bombed the Syrian city of Mayadin in south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr governorate, killing 35 civilians, most of them women and children, and injuring dozens more. The Syrian Government believes that the authors' failure to mention the crimes committed by the "international coalition" demonstrates blatant bias on their part. Indeed, the United Nations should have reaffirmed the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic when it noted in the report that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had joined the international coalition.

The Syrian Government finds it regrettable that the Secretariat has ignored the acts of aggression committed by the Turkish regime. Unfortunately, the Secretariat is attempting to legitimize the actions of the Turkish regime and its allies in Syria. Such actions are blatant attacks against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, flagrantly violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations, amount to direct support for terrorism and have helped to prolong the crisis.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the authors of the report commend the humanitarian efforts of Jordan but ignore the suffering of Syrians in the border areas and in camps within Jordanian territory. The authors also fail to mention that the Jordanian regime supports terrorist organizations that are active in the southern regions and provides them with fighters, materiel and all forms of support, something of which we had repeatedly informed the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

It is regrettable that the Secretariat neither characterized the attack that the American army carried out on 18 May 2017 against Government forces and allied forces, which were heading towards Tanf to combat the terrorist organization ISIL, as an act of aggression and a grave violation of international law that threatens peace and security in the region, nor condemned that attack and subsequent attacks.

The Syrian Government rejects the references to militias in paragraph 5, and stresses that Syrian Government forces cooperate with allied groups that help them to combat terrorism in a lawful and legitimate manner.

The Syrian Government condemns the fact that, in paragraph 29 of the report, the Secretariat defers to the Turkish regime by continuing to describe Turkey's closure of the Nusaybin border crossing as temporary, even though it has been in place since December 2015, and by accepting Turkey's claim that the closure is for security reasons. The Erdoğan regime's true objective in closing this crossing is to increase the suffering of Syrian civilians in Hasakah governorate; meanwhile, it is helping thousands of mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters to enter into Syria. In that regard, the Syrian Government notes that it has informed the Resident Coordinator that it consents to the reopening of the Nusaybin crossing provided that humanitarian assistance is brought through the crossing in coordination with the Syrian Government, which is represented by the Governor of Hasakah, and on condition that such assistance is distributed through the relief subcommittee in Hasakah. However, the Turkish Government still refuses to respond to United Nations requests to open the border crossing, and the United Nations has not taken any serious action, in deference to the feelings of the Turkish regime.

The Syrian Government is disappointed that, in paragraph 29, the authors of the report failed to note the actions that it has been taking to facilitate United Nations humanitarian operations in Syria and reduce operational costs, including, inter alia, the Government's decision to allow humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations and its agencies and by the World Food Programme (WFP) to be transported from Rif Dimashq, Damascus, Homs and Aleppo governorates via the agreed upon land route to Hasakah governorate and Qamishli city. This significant action on the part of the Government demonstrates its commitment to facilitating humanitarian access and removing the obstacles that impede the work of humanitarian partners.

The authors of the report ignore the fact that donor conferences have become propaganda shows, and that States which claim to be donors have not fulfilled their pledges. Indeed, those States have delivered only 21 per cent of the amounts that they had pledged to contribute to the 2017 Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Response Plan and had announced in various media. The failure of those States to fulfil their pledges gives lie to their claims that they care for the Syrian people and are desirous of ensuring the success of United Nations efforts in Syria. It demonstrates that all they care for are their interests and that they merely aspire to fulfil their own policies.

The Syrian Government is disappointed that the authors relay a number of claims and accusations that have been levelled against it with regard to procedural and logistical matters related to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to unstable areas. It has facilitated the delivery of such assistance in every possible way, so long as the assistance is intended for Syrian civilians in need and its delivery is arranged for in accordance with the applicable Syrian laws and regulations.

The Syrian Government reiterates that it has authorized the World Health Organization (WHO) to send medical assistance, including medical devices and medicines, to Qamishli in Hasakah governorate, Mayadin in Dayr al-Zawr governorate and Duma and eastern Ghutah in Rif Dimashq governorate. The Government has also approved a number of other requests made directly by WHO to deliver assistance to specific areas by means of its convoys operating as part of the inter-agency convoys.

Contrary to the claims made in paragraph 26 of the report, the Syrian Government regularly approves the importation of medical supplies by inter-agency convoys, as well as requests submitted by United Nations organizations working in Syria.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that representatives of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have been remiss in making arrangements for convoys. They have focused exclusively on areas that already receive monthly assistance, and have provided inaccurate figures regarding the number of convoys per month and the number of areas that are reached, in order to diminish the efforts of the Syrian Government.

The Government stresses that OCHA figures on humanitarian assistance convoys are incorrect. Since the beginning of 2017, there have been 45 humanitarian assistance convoys. In April and May 2017 alone, there were 16 such convoys:

- Nine inter-agency convoys (United Nations, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Syrian Arab Red Crescent) were sent to the following areas: Zabadani, Madaya, Duma and surrounding towns, eastern Harasta, Mudayrah, Misraba (on 19 June), the area of Wadi Barada and surrounding towns, Jayrud, Nasiriyah, Atanah, Herbinasiah, Aqrab, Tallaf, Khirbat al-Jami',

the Hulah area, Taldu, Kafr Laha, the Dar al-Kabirah area, Ghanatu, Tayr Ma'lah and Rastan and surrounding towns (vaccinations only).

- On 8 April 2017, the United Nations and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) dispatched a joint convoy to Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham.
- ICRC, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, dispatched six convoys to Ruhaybah, Kanakir, Damir, Kafr Zayta, Qal'at al-Madiq, Afrin and Tall Rifat.

The Syrian Government stresses that the authors of the report and United Nations agencies operating in Syria must address the question of delivery of humanitarian aid in a precise and unbiased manner. We note that certain United Nations agencies are exaggerating needs in certain areas and requesting delivery of vast quantities of aid that are greatly out of line with the number of beneficiaries and their needs. Meanwhile, those same agencies deliver little or no assistance at all to other areas. Such conduct has, in several cases, led to waste of effort and funds, and allowed the goods being delivered to spoil and exceed their expiration date.

The Syrian Government is disappointed that the authors of the report would deliberately use any part thereof to convey negative messages about the Government and level false accusations against it. For example, in paragraph 28, the authors state that the Government did not respond to or failed to approve three requests from WFP, overlooking the fact that the Government had approved the vast majority of the requests that WFP had made, which number 1,792 according to the report.

The Syrian Government stresses that the United Nations must conduct humanitarian work in full cooperation with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. It must not pay heed or bow to the demands of other actors, such as the "local authorities" that the authors mention.

In keeping with its concern for Syrian citizens throughout the country and its efforts to alleviate their suffering and help them overcome the current crisis, the Syrian Government has taken all necessary measures to allow students who reside in areas where armed terrorist groups are present to leave those areas in order to take their school examinations. To that end, the Government has established special testing centres that have everything that students might need, including school supplies, teachers, food and drink. Paragraph 35 not only fails to mention those efforts, but also fails to acknowledge that the efforts of UNRWA and the United Nations Children's Fund would not have succeeded had it not been for the support and assistance that the Syrian Government has provided and the relevant measures that it has taken. At the same time, the Government has continued working to evacuate the injured, the sick and the aged from those areas and provide them with free health care. The failure to mention what the Syrian Government has done and is doing demonstrates the extent to which its efforts are being denied and just how severely it is being targeted and maligned.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the Secretariat has once again failed to mention the economic, social, humanitarian, and medical suffering borne by the Syrian people as a result of the ongoing unilateral coercive economic measures imposed by the United States of America, the European Union and other States against such sectors as health, electricity, energy, trade, finance and transfer of funds, which are vital to the survival of the Syrian people and relief operations. The Government stresses that by continuing to ignore this fundamental issue, the authors of the report will have to bear the responsibility of covering up the actions of States that violate the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's

relevant resolutions by imposing the above-mentioned measures. We remind you that monitoring the effects of such measures on the standard of living in and the prosperity of targeted States is one of the obligations imposed on the United Nations by the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The Government is surprised that the authors continue to include incorrect information in the reports. It therefore reaffirms that it has granted approval for 26 international non-governmental organizations (not 21, as stated in the report) to carry out humanitarian and relief work in Syria. Those organizations are given the assistance they need to carry out their work in accordance with the legislation and laws in force in the Syrian Arab Republic. In May, the Syrian Government approved 26 applications for entry visas to Syria (not 13, as stated in the report) and 64 applications for renewal of residence (not 36, as stated in the report). The Syrian Government also granted hundreds of entry visas to employees of the ICRC and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Syrian Government rejects the Secretariat's continual promotion of cross-border assistance, and reiterates that such assistance is ineffective, given that most of it falls into the hands of armed terrorist groups deployed in the targeted areas. The notifications sent to the Government do not meet the minimum standard of credibility with regard to figures, data, number of beneficiaries and information on the parties that receive and distribute assistance to civilian beneficiaries.

The Syrian Government reiterates that the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic cannot carry out its duty, as it is not capable, to date, of verifying that cross-border assistance is reaching its rightful beneficiaries. We remind you that the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ramtha crossings are also entry points for arms, materiel and ammunition being smuggled to armed terrorist groups in Syria. The Government strongly rejects the authors' continued bias in favour of Turkey and Jordan when discussing the delivery of cross-border assistance. It reiterates that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent stands ready to monitor the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its intended recipients, but the Secretariat has in the past rejected that proposal.

The Syrian Government reiterates its stated position regarding the International Criminal Court and the calls that have been made to refer the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to that Court, and stresses that the Court is not competent to address the situation in Syria. Moreover, the Court has lost all credibility and has been transformed into a political tool that is used by certain parties to attack specific States for sordid political ends that have nothing to do with the requirements of justice. The Government also reiterates the substance of the letter that it sent to the Secretary-General (A/71/799) regarding the serious legal flaws in the resolution concerning the establishment of an International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

The Syrian Government regrets that the report does not call for action that would help to improve the situation in Syria, in particular the humanitarian situation. The Secretariat should frankly and clearly call on the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and other countries to refrain from supporting terrorism in Syria, frankly call on the European Union, the United States of America and other States to lift the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on Syria and call for those regimes that support terrorism and seek to undermine the foundations of a political solution, prolong the crisis and drain Syria to be held accountable for their actions.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on intra-Syrian dialogue under Syrian leadership without foreign intervention and without preconditions. It reminds the Secretariat that the success of the political process and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious and non-politicized international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism and on an immediate end to the unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed on the Syrian people. The Syrian Government has played a constructive role in the success of the Astana and Geneva meetings.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to prevail on the States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to refrain from so doing, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and the financing thereof, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). Compliance with and enforcement of those resolutions is the key to resolving the situation in Syria and delivering unprecedented humanitarian assistance to those in need.

I should be grateful if this letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Louay **Falouh**
Minister Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.